



TERRIFIC FIRE IN HONGKONG.

DESTRUCTION OF SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF HOUSES.

SPEAKING in the Legislative Council a year or two ago with reference to the organisation of the Fire Brigade, Sir Arthur Kennedy said that, sometimes when he looked down from Government House on the closely built dwellings and business habitations in the centre of this city, he trembled to think what the consequences might be of a fire originating in the midst of those buildings. Our late Governor could hardly have imagined on these occasions a worse calamity from fire than befel this Colony last night. Within the space of about twelve hours hundreds of houses have been destroyed, and probably thousands of people have been deprived of their homes. It is calculated that about ten acres of ground have been covered by the fire, and when it is added that the catastrophe has occurred in a densely populated part of Victoria, where rows after rows of houses succeed each other in close order, some idea of the amount of the property destroyed may be conjectured. The fire originated last night (Christmas Day) at about 11 p.m., and at the moment of writing this (3 p.m. to-day) the last fierce battle between the firemen and the flames has just been brought to a victorious conclusion. It is believed that the conflagration has now been brought fairly under control, although a high wind and a little lack of watchfulness on the part of the firemen might result in the flames again setting out on their destructive course through the Colony.

Commencing at Fisher's—a small general dealer's establishment in Endicott Lane, in the neighbourhood of the P. & O. Offices, the fire, fanned by a pretty strong breeze, at intervals from the north, rapidly extended in a southerly direction through the Colony, crossed the Queen's Road and other streets, and was only brought under control this morning on reaching the Station Compound. The Civil Hospital and several European establishments are in ruins. So far as we could ascertain from a careful tramp round the scene of the conflagration this morning, its boundaries are as follows. On the west Scott Lane bounds the block of Praya buildings visited by the fire, although portions of this block owing to the southerly direction of the wind escaped without injury, the P. & O. offices being among the buildings saved from the devouring element. The firemen made a desperate stand against the fire in Gilman's street, but the row of buildings intervening between it and Gilman's bazaar could be only kept free from the flames at the Praya end. This morning an immense quantity of half-burnt firewood could be seen in the Bazaar—one evidence at least of the activity and success of the firemen in their efforts to get the conflagration under. In saying so much, however, it must not be understood that there is unmixt satisfaction abroad at the way in which things were managed last night and this morning; in fact many people are of opinion that the fire ought not have been allowed to cross the Queen's Road. Having got across this main thoroughfare, the fire was not stayed in its westward course until it reached the Stag Hotel, which is the first building standing intact to the westward on that side of the way. From the Stag Hotel the fire pursued its southerly course (to most people the course probably seemed a south-easterly one) until on its western limit it reached Schmidt's, the gun-maker's, at the corner of Peel and Wellington Streets. This establishment it burnt, but left A. Lock's, gold and silver-smith, at the opposite western corner. Thence the fire took its way upwards to the walls of the Police Magistracy and Goal establishments, where its southerly course was arrested. Cochrane Street, Gutzlaff Street, Graham Street, were entirely destroyed, and also portions of Stanley Street, Wellington Street, Gage Street, Lyndhurst Terrace and Hollywood Road. The eastern limit of the fire in the Queen's Road on the north side is the entrance gate to the P. & O. offices, which is to the east of the offices themselves. From this gate the eastern limit of the fire crosses the Queen's Road, and extends eastwards to Koss's establishment, whence it passes straight up Pottinger Street to the walls of the Magistracy. The whole of the eastern side of Pottinger Street is saved, while the whole of the opposite side is burnt.

Perhaps the most exciting work of the whole fire was the battle to prevent the flames from crossing from Koss's at the bottom of Pottinger Street, to the opposite side of that thoroughfare.

The saving of the whole of the fine block of buildings terminating in the Hongkong Dispensary at the eastern end depended on the success of this conflict between the firemen and the flames, and probably also the safety of the Hongkong Club, the China Mail Office, the German Club, and the whole block of noble buildings extending eastwards from the German Club to the Cathedral. It did not appear to have been discovered until 10 or 11 o'clock this morning that the fire was quietly working its way towards Koss's establishment, and another lofty building a little higher up Pottinger Street. The latter establishment first attracted attention, and a great deal was done in the way of removing the verandah and other wood-work to prevent the flames from spreading to the low building exactly opposite. Later on an attempt was made to blow up the same house with gunpowder or dynamite, but it was only partially successful, and presently the house was in full blaze. Koss's establishment also burst into flames at about the same time. An effort had also been made to blow this building up when it was seen that it must go, and that there was considerable danger of its communicating the flames to the Hongkong Dispensary block, but beyond smashing the glass, tearing the interior to pieces somewhat and bulging out the iron shutters, the explosion had little effect. Presently the imposing building burst from top to bottom into flames. The iron shutters became red-hot, and the interior of the building was like a roaring furnace. Most people were inclined to the opinion that it was impossible to save the Hongkong Dispensary block, and preparations were made in the most remote of the buildings, and even in the succeeding block, in which the Club and the office of this paper is situated, for the sudden removal of effects. The firemen did their best, but with the miserable streams of water at their command, they could do no more than keep the walls of the house opposite to the roaring conflagration at Koss's wetted. The jets would not reach to the top of the building. To make matters worse the fire in the building about thirty yards higher up the hill became more intense, and at one period fire was discovered in the low building opposite, previously referred to, but was speedily extinguished. Fortunately the wind was light, and a little later was blowing straight up the hill. Slowly the flames in the two buildings were reduced in intensity, and a mighty sigh of relief must have gone round when it was seen that the firemen had obtained control of the fire, and that the Hongkong Dispensary block and succeeding blocks were saved.

ANOTHER REPORT.

The fire of last night and to-day is the largest which has ever been known to have occurred in the central part of the city. It is wholly impossible to estimate the value of the property destroyed, so vast is it in extent. The streets which the destroying element has not reached are, as we write, strewn with every conceivable article of household furniture and merchandise, and hundreds if not thousands of families are rendered homeless and homeless. Independent of the loss of property, the distress occasioned by this to the unparalled catastrophe must be tremendous. The fire originated in a house at the Queen's Road, and in a house at the Queen's Road, occupied by a European named Edward Fisher, who was engaged in a small commission business. The alarm was given about 10.45 p.m. last night, at a time, moreover, when nearly all were doubtless enjoying their Christmas dinner. The brigades nevertheless turned out with alacrity, and about a quarter of an hour after the alarm had been given one of the Government steam engines was got to work and a good stream of water was brought to play on the flames, which by this time had reached the Queen's Road and the adjoining opposite houses in the lane. The flames shooting into the air for several yards and throwing a lurid glare over the neighbourhood. Another engine, a hand engine, was got to work on the Queen's Road side, but the puerile efforts of the engines proved of no avail and it was perfectly evident to almost everyone that nothing could save the adjoining buildings, but instantly pulling down or minding the next few houses. The wind was blowing fresh from the N. E. at the time and therefore the probable direction of the fire could be easily judged. That some one blundered there can be no two opinions, and some one was or ought to have been responsible; and it is scandalous that such gross mismanagement should be allowed to occur. The Chinese rabble who carry about lamps and create a disturbance by yelling and shouting, and rushing to and fro carrying loads of furniture, increased the confusion. The flames spread rapidly to the westward, the houses in the Queen's Road opposite being in imminent danger, whilst in the lane the fire was creeping its way slowly but surely back towards the Praya. Attention was at once directed to prevent the opposite houses catching, but the heat was so intense that it was wholly impossible to hold a hose up in front of it. An im-

prompt screen was held up so as to abate the glare and heat; this proceeding was however hopeless, and those in authority were strongly advised to pull down some of the adjoining houses or have them blown down. Orders and counter orders were given first by one and then by the other, the fire meanwhile spreading rapidly. It was evident by this time that the conflagration was becoming a dreadfully serious one unless some prompt measures were taken to stop its progress. Water was almost useless and served but to intensify the heat, yet nothing was done. At 5 minutes past midnight the opposite side of Q. Road caught fire at No. 98, and it was a mere question of time when the whole of the adjoining houses would be at the mercy of the flames. Commodore Watson was on the scene in uniform with a number of blue jackets, who usual worked most manfully. General Donovan was also present in uniform, and a detachment of the 74th Highlanders. Major Rooke with a party of Artillery and Engineers was prepared to blow the houses up, and was only awaiting orders to do so. Almost as soon as he got them they were countermanded by some one else. In fact every one appeared to be giving orders, and there was apparently a total want of organization throughout. The fire had the South side of Q. Road well in hand by 20 minutes past 12, and a huge wall of smoke gave the alarm to stand clear, presumably to give the powder was about to be used, but unfortunately this was never done. Some would-be smart hands were engaged destroying property and throwing furniture into the street, which however well intentioned served no other purpose than forming a lead for the fire. The indecision displayed as to the advisability of using powder was to the last of it most childish; the only objection appeared to be that a few lives might be lost, but with proper precaution such a possibility would be nearly impossible. Two lives were, we believe, lost on the last occasion in which it was used. Five minutes to one Woo Cheong's photograph shop was on fire, and the Stag Hotel appeared to be doomed, but most miraculously to relate the wind suddenly shifted from N. E. round by N. to N. W., thus clearing the Stag, which got off with very slight damage. Those in power soon became aware of the folly they had been guilty of in not blowing it sooner, but the fire was by this time licking its way in all directions, everyone appearing staggered at the immensity of the conflagration. The wind continued to blow very fresh with occasional heavy squalls, and the dry season was having lately enjoyed had made every inch combustible balance easily ignitable. That the brigades worked hard there could be no doubt, but their efforts were almost useless so widespread was the calamity. In Mr. Schmidt's (the gun maker's) house there were a number of cartridges, and these were at once got out, everything else being lost. Before 2 a.m. the fire had extended to the ravages eastward as far as the P. & O. gale, where its progress however was not stayed. At 10 minutes past 3 o'clock the first charge of powder was exploded, and a house at the corner of the Wellington and Peel Streets brought to the ground. The fire was gradually creeping towards Messrs Vogel Hagedorn & Co.'s premises, the lanes at the rear, most of which were filled with firewood, burning at a white heat, the whole being in one mass of flame. The Praya and the upper roads were all filled with goods of every conceivable description, and the thieves had it all their own way, it was in fact wholly impossible for the police to have done more than they did; as it was 70 or 80 men were arrested. A detachment of the 74th Highlanders was held off to guard the Oriental Bank. Two more houses were blown down in Peel Street before 4 o'clock, and a complete mastery of others. The fire had complete mastery of the town, and as far as Gage Street, sweeping away the whole block of houses between it and Cochrane Street. The fire then travelled along Lyndhurst Terrace, through Stanley Street to the New Civil Hospital which caught fire at 4 past 9 o'clock. Part of it was blown down to prevent the flames from reaching the Central, and at noon or shortly afterwards the Civil Hospital was a heap of ruins. The Station Yard was full of all sorts of furniture and property of every description. Numbers of Europeans were drunk owing to a measure to the festive season, and partly to the opportunities afforded them of obtaining the wherewithal, and some very disgusting and many amusing sights were the necessary result. A deal of looting was carried on by both Europeans and Chinese, who, not content with enriching themselves by the misery of others, went straight to the Police Station and robbed Mr. Greagh's and the Inspectors' quarters, they then set to work and wilfully and maliciously destroyed all they could lay their hands on. Scott Lane would have been gutted had it not been for the timely assistance of one of the engines which nipped the fire in the bud. At 7.50 a.m. the roof of the R. C. Cathedral caught fire, and half it had not been quickly noticed and put out by the aid of buckets there can be no knowing where it would have ended. The patients from the Civil Hospital were removed to the Old Lock Hospital. We believe that there have been several accidents, but we have not heard of any loss of life; one woman was taken out of a house of ill fame drunk, her house being at the time in a blaze, a fact of which she was quite ignorant and indifferent. There are many of the worst dens of infamy cleared out. We understand that the Captain of the S. S. *Peruvia* has offered an asylum for 600 Chinese, and many others have followed suit; while several godowns have been brought into requisition. The fire is still raging as we go to press, and the Volunteers have been asked to do duty as military police during the night.

LOCAL AND GENERAL.

The delivery of the French mail was begun at 6.20 this evening.

We learn that the S. S. *Boven* left Singapore for this yesterday (25th).

The British barque *Dartmouth*, Captain Robertson, left here on the 24th for Denmark with Chinese emigrants. She takes 430 men, 47 women, and 23 children, altogether amounting to 494 adults. His Excellency the Governor paid a visit to the vessel in the afternoon of the 24th, when he inspected her and expressed himself much pleased with the arrangements for the comfort of the emigrants, their wives, and families.

A GENERAL feeling prevails that a gross lack of system or a lamentable want of harmony existed amongst the different bodies at work extinguishing the great fire of last night. Every one appears to think that the flames ought to have been kept under a very small compass, and that the bodies measures of making a cordon of gaps around the burning mass, by means of pulling down or blowing up neighbouring houses, ought to have been taken hours before they were attempted. It is admittedly easy to comment upon how the door was not fastened after the steed is miles away; and we should be sorry to point to any particular official, civil or military, upon whose shoulders the blame ought to rest. The fresh breeze also may have had much to do with the alarming spread of the fire. The result, however, is the same. While flatter ourselves for the last ten years that a fire had no chance against our Brigades and Engines, we have discovered to our horror and amazement that a fire can assume the mastery, spread from block to block and street to street, and baffling all the skill or preconceived notions of our Fire-master and his assistants. How the fatal delay to blow up the unburnt adjacent buildings, especially corner houses, was occasioned, we are not as yet in a position to say. The Fire-master it appears gave his authority to destroy in order to save, early in the evening, but for some unaccountable reason the opportunity was lost, and the flames marched on unchecked. It burnt furiously for about seventeen hours, devouring property roughly estimated at about a million of dollars. How the Brigade men, the military and naval detachments, and many volunteers, worked like lions, though their efforts were evidently misdirected or but ill guided, will be readily admitted by all who saw them. The distress among the Chinese will, it is stated, be relieved by their own people, several officers having been respectfully declined by the leading Chinese merchants. Captain McKirdy, of the steamer *Terrace*, placed his fine steamer at the disposal of the authorities; but though comfortable quarters could have been thus obtained for 700 or 800, the Chinese refused to accept of the offer, considering it modest. It is to be hoped that the homeless may be provided with shelter of some kind or other. During the day the 74th Highlanders have been doing patrol duty, and the soldiers, together with those of the Volunteers who have not been out all night, will share with the Police the arduous duty of patrolling the busy streets during this night. A friendly offer from the Spanish Consul of 100 men-of-war's men was declined by the Governor, with thanks, as being unnecessary under the circumstances; but a detachment from the *Patino* did good service during the fire.

As we go to press we observe that the fire shows signs of revival at several important points. It is stated that some of the engines have been sent home! Should a breeze arise, and an insufficient supply of water be on the spot, it is quite possible we may have a repetition of the scene of last night. The Magistracy is certainly threatened with conflagration at the moment we write.

Advertisements.

HONGKONG & CHINA GAS COMPANY, LIMITED.

NOTICE.

IN consequence of the FIRE NOW RAGING it has been necessary to SHUT OFF THE SUPPLY OF GAS TO THE TOWN. It will be turned on again as soon as it can be done with safety. A. NEWTON, Manager.

Hongkong, December 26, 1878. de27

FOR SWATOW, AMOY & FOCHOW.

The Steamship "DOUGLAS," Captain Young, will be despatched for the above Ports on FRIDAY, the 27th Instant, at Daylight.

For Freight or Passage, apply to DOUGLAS LARPAIK & Co. Hongkong, December 24, 1878. de27

FOR SINGAPORE, BRISBANE, SYDNEY & MELBOURNE.

(Calling off the usual Coast Ports, and taking through Cargo and Passengers for New Zealand.)

The Eastern and Australian Mail Steam Co.'s Steamer "SOMERSET," Captain Pockley, will be despatched as above on the 28th Instant, at Noon.

For Freight or Passage, apply to GIBB, LIVINGSTON & Co. Agents. Hongkong, December 17, 1878. de28

Advertisements.

FOR SINGAPORE AND PENANG.

The Norwegian Steamer "HAKON ADELSTEN," Capt. Bernon, will load here for the above Ports, and will leave this on FRIDAY, the 27th Instant, at 2 p.m.

For Freight or Passage, apply to HOP KEE. Hongkong, December 23, 1878. de27

FOR HOIHOW AND HAIPHONG.

The Steamship "THALES," Captain Pocock, will be despatched for the above Ports on SATURDAY, the 28th Instant, at Noon.

For Freight or Passage, apply to DOUGLAS LARPAIK & Co. Hongkong, December 24, 1878. de28

AUSTRALASIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY.

FOR PORT DARWIN, COOKTOWN, SYDNEY & MELBOURNE.

Taking Cargo and Passengers for all Australasian and New Zealand Ports, TASMANIA, NEW CALEDONIA & FIJI. The Chartered Steamship "ZAMBOANGA," will be despatched as above on SATURDAY, the 28th Instant, at 3 p.m.

For Freight or Passage, apply to GEO. R. STEVENS & Co. Hongkong, December 17, 1878. de28

DENTAL NOTICE.

D. ROGERS has Returned and is Now Ready to RECEIVE PATIENTS at No. 7, ARBUTHNOT ROAD. Hongkong, November 23, 1878.

NOTICE.

G. FALCONER & Co. beg to announce that, during DECEMBER and JANUARY Next, they will offer their Large and Magnificent Stock of JEWELLERY, WATCHES, CLOCKS, SILVER and ELECTRO-PLATE, &c., &c., Considerably under the Usual Prices.

Shortly expected from England, an Elegant ASSORTMENT of SILVER CUPS, suitable for REGATTA or RACE MEETINGS. Hongkong, November 26, 1878. fel

THE HONGKONG DISPENSARY.

Established A.D. 1841.

香港大藥房

A. S. WATSON & Co., FAMILY & DISPENSING CHEMISTS,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DRUGGISTS, IMPORTERS

OF DRUGGISTS' SUPPLIES, NURSERY REQUISITES, TOILET REQUISITES, ENGLISH, AMERICAN, AND FRENCH PATENT MEDICINES.

MANUFACTURERS OF Soda Water, Lemonade, Tonic Water, Gingerale, Potass Water, Sarsaparilla Water, and other Aerated Waters.

The Manufactory is under direct and continuous European Supervision. Hongkong, June 1, 1876.

SHIPPING.

ARRIVALS.

Dec. 25, *Peiho*, French steamer, 2125, Paquinini, Shanghai Dec. 22, Mails and General.—MESSAGERIES MARITIMES. Dec. 25, *Hailong*, British steamer, 277, P. P. Goode, Tamsui Dec. 20, and Amoy 24, General.—DOUGLAS LARPAIK & Co. Dec. 25, *Namoa*, British steamer, 862, Geo. Westoby, Foochow Dec. 22, Amoy 23, and Swatow 24, General.—DOUGLAS LARPAIK & Co. Dec. 25, H. M. S. *Lapwing*, 784, Comr. W. J. Scott, Manila Dec. 20. Dec. 25, *Ningpo*, British steamer, 814, Drowes, Shanghai Dec. 22, General.—SIEMSEN & Co. Dec. 25, *Nuevo Cons'ante*, Spanish sch., 203, José Uriarte, Lagunillas Nov. 9, Timber.—REMEDIOS & Co. Dec. 25, *Madeleine*, French barque, 406, Pateau, Honolulu Nov. 24, Ballast.—CAPTAIN. Dec. 25, *Tai Watt*, Siamese barque, 654, L. Bruhn, Swatow Dec. 23, General and Ballast.—CHINESE. Dec. 26, *Cassandra*, German steamer, 937, W. Langer, Chafco Dec. 20, General.—SIEMSEN & Co. Dec. 26, *Iravaddy*, French steamer, 2558, Gauvain, Marseilles Nov. 17, Naples 19, Port Said 23, Suez 26, Aden 31, Colombo Dec. 9, Galle 10, Singapore 17, and Saigon 21, Mails and General.—MESSAGERIES MARITIMES. Dec. 26, *Volga*, French steamer, 1200, Rolland, Yokohama Dec. 19, General.—MESSAGERIES MARITIMES.

DEPARTURES.

Dec. 25, *Amoy*, for Canton. Dec. 25, *Stentor*, for Shanghai. Dec. 25, *Hansa*, for Tientsin. Dec. 26, *Marco Polo*, for Guam. Dec. 26, *Don Quixote*, for Manila. Dec. 26, *Esmeralda*, for Amoy.

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CLEARED.

Douglas, for Coast Ports. Burmes, for Yokohama.

PASSENGERS.

ARRIVED.

Per *Iravaddy*, for Hongkong: from Marseilles, Mr Dent, His Ex. Liou (Chinese Ambassador), Messrs Tai, Ho, Tchong, Wei, Heli, Ging Gen, Kone, Sul, Middleton, and Hengny; from Aden, Pestondjee Dorabjee; from Galle, Mr W. Robinson; from Singapore, 6 Chinese; from Saigon, 14 Chinese.—For Shanghai: from Marseilles, Mr and Mrs Morrison, Miss Morrison, Messrs Nagasaki, Ralph, Beattie, Percobois, Draks, Elliston, Farrot, Vauze, and Maignan.—For Yokohama: from Marseilles, Messrs Van der Poth, Narrasima, Welbo, Ichihara, Tenima, Ota, Ohsaki, K. Hayara, Sorenbrink, and Dabola; from Naples, Mr Knoblock.

Per *Peiho*, from Shanghai: for Hongkong, His Ex. D. Carlos (Spanish Minister), Messrs E. del Perogo, G. R. Winstone, Miss Shervinton, Mr R. Smith, Miss C. E. Gordon Cumming, Messrs D. Kees, P. Adams, and 10 Chinese; for Saigon, Mr A. Guion, and Mrs Emilie Gualindot; for Singapore, Mr Tom and servant; for London, Messrs Macombes, W. Daffies, W. Stells, B. Parke, W. Brooks, Young, and C. Kainyoff.

Per *Hailong*, from Amoy, Mr Anderson. Per *Namoa*, from Coast Ports, Mr John Dodd, and 100 Chinese. Per *Madeleine*, from Honolulu, 44 Chinese, and 2 families. Per *Volga*, from Yokohama, 14 Europeans.

POST OFFICE NOTIFICATIONS.

MAILS will close:—

For STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.—Per *Hakon Adelsten*, at 1.30 p.m., on Friday, the 27th inst.

For SAIGON.—Per *Fenelo*, at 3.30 p.m., on Friday, the 27th inst.

For TAIKOW, TAIWAN, AND YOKOHAMA.—Per *Zegean*, at 4.30 p.m., on Friday, the 27th inst.

For YOKOHAMA & HIOGO.—Per *Burmes*, at 5 p.m., on Friday, the 27th inst., instead of as previously notified.

For HOIHOW & HAIPHONG, (with Mails for Pakhoi and Hanoi).—Per *Thales*, at 6.30 p.m., on Saturday, the 28th inst.

For PORT DARWIN, SYDNEY, COOKTOWN, MELBOURNE, &c.—Per *Zamboanga*, at 2.30 p.m., on Saturday, the 28th inst. 12 cent rates.

For SAIGON.—Per *Oliva*, at 3.30 p.m., on Friday, the 3rd January.

MEMOS. FOR TO-MORROW.

Shipping.

Daylight.—*Douglas* leaves for Coast Ports. 2 p.m.—*Hakon Adelsten* leaves for Singapore, &c.

Goods per *Glengyle* undelivered after this date subject to rent.

Miscellaneous.

Transfer Books of the H. K. & C. Gas Co., Limited, closed from this date to 3rd Proximo, inclusive.

General Memoranda.

SATURDAY, December 28:—Noon.—French Mail leaves for Ports of Call and Europe.

Noon.—*Thales* leaves for Hoihow, &c.

Noon.—*Somers* leaves for Singapore, &c.

3 p.m.—*Zamboanga* leaves for Port Darwin, &c.

TUESDAY, December 31:—3 p.m.—Occidental & Oriental S. S. Co.'s Steamer leaves for Yokohama and San Francisco.

Goods per *Glengyle* undelivered after this date subject to rent.

WEDNESDAY (New Year Day), Jan. 1, 1879:—Local Banks close for Public Business.

SUNDAY, January 5:—*Manila II* leaves for San Francisco on or about this date.

MONDAY, January 6:—2 p.m.—Sale of Household Furniture, &c., at the Hon. J. M. Price's residence, Caine Road.

FRIDAY, January 10:—*Alma* leaves for London on or before this date.

MONDAY, January 13:—3 p.m.—Meeting of Shareholders of The Chinese Insurance Co., Limited, at the Head Office, Hongkong.

MONDAY, January 20:—Sale of the Iron Screw Steamship *America*, by Messrs. Hughes & Legge, on or about this date.

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